

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 EB-11 RSR-01 /092 W  
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8802

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 3972

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: IT, PINT

SUBJECT: REPUBLICANS ASK REPLACEMENT OF POSTAL MINISTER GIOIA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: REPUBLICAN PARTY HAS DENOUNCED GOVERNMENT'S PROHIBITION BY DECREE OF PRIVATE CABLE TV NETWORKS, AND HAS DEMANDED REPLACEMENT OF DC MINISTER OF POSTS AND COMMUNICATIONS GIOIA. IN RESPONSE, ANDREOTTI HAS DEFENDED ACTION BUT HAS OFFERED TO DISCUSS MATTER IN PARLIAMENT. NEXT TWO TO THREE DAYS ARE LIKELY TO DETERMINE WHETHER ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT WILL SURVIVE UNTIL JUNE DC CONGRESS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN SURPRISE DEVELOPMENT MAY 15, REPUBLICAN PARTY DIRECTORATE CHALLENGED CONSTITUTIONALITY AND EXPRESSED STRONG DISSENT FROM SUBSTANCE OF RECENT GOVERNMENT DECREE CHANGING REGULATIONS OF MINISTRY OF POSTS AND COMMUNICATIONS, SO AS TO EFFECTIVELY PROHIBIT COMPETITION WITH STATE- CONTROLLED TV BY PRIVATE CABLE NETWORKS. REPUBLICANS CHARGED THAT MINISTER OF POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS GIOVANNI GIOIA ( DC ) SHOULD HAVE CONSULTED ALL MAJOR PARTIES BEFORE PASSING DEATH SENTENCE ON SMALL- SCALE LOCAL CABLE NETWORKS FUNCTIONING OR PLANNED IN SEVERAL CITIES. AFTER ALLUDING TO THEIR TUFF WITH GIOIA OVER EXPERIMENTAL COLOR TV BROADCASTS LAST FALL, REPUBLICANS DECLARED THAT GIOIA " NO LONGER HOLDS CONFIDENCE OF ONE OF MAJORITY PARTIES", AND DEMANDED HIS SUBSTITUTION.

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3. AFTER CONSULTATIONS WITH GIOIA, PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI DISPATCHED LETTER TO PRI SECRETARY LA MALFA DEFENDING LEGALITY AND WISDOM OF GOVERNMENT ACTION, OFFERING TO DISCUSS MATTER FULLY IN PARLIAMENT, AND ARGUING THAT PROHIBITION OF CABLE TV WAS NECESSARY TO FULFILL GOVERNMENT PROMISE TO PRESERVE STATUS QUO OF ITALIAN TV INDUSTRY PENDING BROAD- SCALE REFORM BY PARLIAMENT. LIBERAL AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY SPOKESMAN WERE QUICK TO DISASSOCIATE THEIR PARTIES FROM GIOIA' S " UNILATERAL " ACTION, BUT PRESS POINTS OUT THAT DECREE ( ISSUED IN LATE MARCH BUT NOT PUBLISHED UNTIL MAY 3 ) HAD BEEN COUNTERSIGNED IN FEBRUARY BY BOTH PSDI AND PLI MINISTERS WHOSE AREAS OF COMPETENCE ARE PERIPHERALLY AFFECTED.

4. LEFT OPPOSITION LEADERS ASSERT THAT DECREE WAS RESPONSIBILITY OF ENTIRE CABINET, AND THAT THEREFORE REPUBLICAN MOVE DEPRIVES GOVERNMENT AS WHOLE OF PARLIAMENTARY CONFIDENCE. HOWEVER, AT THIS STAGE ANDREOTTI APPEARS DISPOSED NEITHER TO DROP GIOIA NOR TO CONCEDE THAT HIS REFUSAL TO DO SO LOGICALLY IMPLIES FULL- BLOWN CRISIS FOR GOVERNMENT ITSELF. HIS DESIRE TO SIDESTEP ISSUE ARE AIDED BY PSDI SECRETARY ORLANDI' S SUGGESTION THAT ISSUE IS SUITABLE ONE FOR DISCUSSION IN TALKS ON POSSIBLE RESTORATION OF CENTER- LEFT AFTER DC CONGRESS. WELL PLACED REPUBLICAN SOURCE HAS CONCEDED TO EMB OFF THAT PRI ACTION RISKS BRINGING DOWN ANDREOTTI BEFORE DC CONGRESS, BUT INSISTS THIS NOT THEIR GOAL. ( REPORTEDLY, LA MALFA AND MAJORITY OF DIRECTORATE HAD REFUSED TO GO ALONG WITH EVEN STRONGER STATEMENT, PROPOSED BY VICE- SECRETARY BATTAGLIA AND PARTY' S LEFT- WING, WHICH WOULD HAVE EXPLICITLY HELD ENTIRE GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBLE FOR GIOIA' S ACTION ). UNDOUBTEDLY, MATTER WILL BE DISCUSSED AT MEETING OF ANDREOTTI WITH LEADERS OF MAJORITY PARTIES FIRST SCHEDULED FOR 17 MAY, BUT ACCORDING TO WELL PLACED PSDI DEPUTY MEETING HAS BEEN MOVED UP TO THIS EVENING.

5. COMMENT: REPUBLICAN SUPPORT FOR GIOIA' S HEAD REFLECT DEEP IRRITATION AT HIS HAVING EXCLUDED THEM FROM DECISION MAKING IN AREA IN WHICH PRI HAS LONG MANIFESTED MAJOR INTEREST. HOWEVER, IN PRESENTLY UNSETTLED POLITICAL SITUATION THIS DECLARATION SMACKS BO BRINKMANSHIP, AND IS DIFFICULT TO SQUARE WITH LA MALFA' S OFT- STATED PROMISE TO SUPPORT PRESENT GOVERNMENT UNTIL BETTER ONE HAS BEEN AGREED UPON. EVENT MAY WEAKEN ANDREOTTI' S HAND IN CRUCIAL PRE- CONGRESS PERIOD, BUT NEED NOT BRING HIM DOWN UNLESS THERE IS SUFFICIENT WILL WITHIN MAJORITY THAT HE FALL FOR OTHER REASONS.

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TONIGHT' S MEETING MAY BE CRUCIAL, BUT IN ANY CASE NEXT TWO TO THREE DAYS SHOULD GIVE READING ON PROSPECTS FOR ANDREOTTI CABINET TO LAST, AS SO OFTEN PREDICTED, UNTIL 6-10 CONGRESS.

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\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* CONFIDENTIAL

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** n/a  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** golinofr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** golinofr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 04 DEC 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <04-Dec-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <05-Dec-2001 by golinofr>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 980217  
**Subject:** REPUBLICANS ASK REPLACEMENT OF POSTAL MINISTER GIOIA  
**TAGS:** PINT, IT, PINT  
**To:** EUR  
**SECSTATE WASHDC**  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005